

## Message Text

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70/40

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

OMB-01 /068 W

----- 031580

P R 251115Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8877

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 5820

C O R R E C T E D COPY: GARBLED TEXT

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BG, IN

SUBJ: INDIA AND BANGLADESH

REF: DATE 277732

1. SUMMARY. MY REQUESTED COURTESY CALL ON THE NEW FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK HUSAIN COINCIDED WITH DEPARTMENTS'S QUESTIONS IN REFTEL AND, AS IT TURNED OUT BY HIS OWN ADMISSION, FOREIGN SECRETARY'S INTENTION TO SPEAK WITH ME ABOUT INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS. IN COURSE OF DISCUSSION FOREIGN SECRETARY (1) REITERATED BDG'S ANXIETY ABOUT ESCALATING TENSIONS AND ABOUT FRESH EVIDENCE OF (READ INDIAN) SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY AGAINST THE PRESENT BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT, (2) DENIED THAT BANGLADESH WAS PURSUING AN ANTI-INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY, (3) CONFIRMED ABSENCE OF EVIDENCE THAT THERE WAS AN UNUSUAL MIGRATION OF HINDU AND (4) DENIED THAT THIS GOVERNMENT INTENDED TO DECLARE ITSELF AN ISLAMIC REPUBLIC. END SUMMARY.

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2. AFTER PRELIMINARIES, I OPENED WITH OBSERVATION THAT

THERE WERE INDICATIONS OF GROWING ANXIETY BOTH IN THE INDIAN PRESS ABOUT CONDITIONS IN BANGLADESH AND IN TURN SOME INDICATIONS IN BANGLADESH OF ANTI-INDIAN CRITICISM THAT COULD PLACE SERIOUS STRAINS ON THEIR BI-LATERAL RELATIONS. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SEEMED MORE THAN READY FOR THIS CONVERSATION. HE IMMEDIATELY STARTED TO SPEAK ABOUT THE RECENT LEWIS SIMONS' ARTICLES AS WELL AS REPORTS IN THE INDIAN PRESS THAT WERE HEATING UP THE SITUATION. WITH REFERENCE TO THE SIMONS ARTICLES, THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID THAT THE INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER HAD MADE A DEMARCHE LAST SUNDAY MORNING ALLEGING BDG COLLUSION WITH SIMONS AND REQUESTED THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT TO PUBLICLY DENY THE "LIES, AS WELL AS MISCHIEVOUS, TENDENTIOUS CONTENTS." TABARAK HUSAIN SAID THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO AGREE WITH MUCH OF SEN'S DESCRIPTION, ESPECIALLY AS THOSE ARTICLES WERE NOT VERY FLATTERING TO BANGLADESH EITHER. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID THAT HE HAD ACTUALLY DISCUSSED WITH SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES THE POSSIBILITY OF MAKING A PUBLIC STATEMENT ABOUT THE ARTICLES, BUT THE LATTER PROMPTLY POINTED OUT THAT ON THAT VERY DAY (NOV. 23) THE SUNDAY STATESMAN IN CALCUTTA WAS PUBLISHING A VERY UNFLATTERING FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE UNDER THE HEADLINE "BANGLADESH FACES FRESH THREAT OF ARMY REVOLT." HE SAID THAT THE PUBLICATION OF SUCH STORIES IN THE CONTEXT OF INDIAN PRESS CONTROLS, ALLEGEDLY INVOLVING COLLABORATION BETWEEN REUTERS AND INDIAN PRESS TRUST, RAISED REAL QUESTIONS REGARDING INDIA'S PRESUMED COMMITMENT NOT TO PERMIT REPORTING THAT MIGHT DAMAGE RELATIONS WITH BANGLADESH.

3. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID HE KNEW THAT I WAS SOMEWHAT CONCERNED ABOUT THE TONE OF GENERAL ZIA'S RADIO ADDRESS LAST SUNDAY EVENING (SEE DACCA'S 5801) AND THAT HE WAS OBLIGED TO EXPLAIN WHY IT WAS MADE AT THIS TIME. HE SAID THE BDG WAS IN RECEIPT OF FRESH EVIDENCE REGARDING EXTREMELY SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY WITH FOREIGN (READ INDIAN) SUPPORT, BASED LARGELY ON THE CONFESSIONS OF MILITARY OFFICERS WHO WERE ARRESTED ONLY A FEW DAYS AGO. HE SAID THEY GAVE EVIDENCE OF ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO UNSETTLE THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION, TO ENCOURAGE CLANDESTINE GROUP MEETINGS, TO RUN DOWN THE VIABILITY OF THE GOVERN-  
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MENT, AND TO COLLECT ARMS. THE OBJECT OF THESE SUBVERSIVES WAS TO KEEP THIS ADMINISTRATION IN A STATE OF TENSION WHICH WOULD LEAD ULTIMATELY TO ITS OVERTHROW. HE SAID THE PUBLIC WOULD FAIL TO UNDERSTAND IF GENERAL ZIA REMAINED SILENT AMIDST THESE ACTIVITIES. HE SAID IT WAS NECESSARY FOR ZIA TO REFER TO THESE THREATS WHILE EMPHASIZING AGAIN THAT THIS WAS A NON-POLITICAL, NON-PARTISAN, INTERIM GOVERNMENT.

4. STRESSING THE INTERIM NATURE OF THIS GOVERNMENT, THE FOREIGN SECRETARY TOLD A STORY ABOUT PRESIDENT SAYEM'S RECENT REFUSAL OF INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER SEN'S CONGRATULATIONS WITH THE REMARK THAT HIS WAS A CARETAKER ROLE AND THAT CONGRATULATIONS SHOULD BE WITHHELD UNTIL THIS ADMINISTRATION HAD SUCCESSFULLY TRANSFORMED ITSELF INTO A DEMOCRATIC, PARLIAMENTARY FORM OF GOVERNMENT. IN ANOTHER ANECDOTE ABOUT SEN, THE FOREIGN SECRETARY THEN WENT ON TO EXPRESS WITH SOME REGRET THE VIOLATION FROM THE INDIAN SIDE OF AN AGREEMENT NOT TO RELEASE THE REPORT ABOUT THE GRENADE IN THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S GARDEN WHEN THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE AS TO ITS ORIGINS. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY STATED THAT THE PREMATURE PUBLIC STATEMENT SEEMED DESIGNED TO SPREAD CONCERN ABOUT ALLEGED DANGERS TO FOREIGN CITIZENS IN BANGLADESH.

5. DEPLORING THE MANY RUMORS, HE SAID THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE OF COMMUNAL DISTURBANCES IN BANGLADESH AND SAID THAT THE MOVEMENT OF HINDUS WAS NO MORE THAN WHAT PERTAINED NORMALLY. ABOUT REPORTS THAT BANGLADESH INTENDED TO DECLARE ITSELF AN ISLAMIC REPUBLIC, THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID THIS WAS CONTRARY TO THE CHARACTER OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. HE OBSERVED THAT SUCH A STEP WOULD REQUIRE A MAJOR POLITICAL DECISION WHICH COULD NOT BE TAKEN BY THIS INTERIM GOVERNMENT AND IF PURSUED, WOULD NECESSITATE A DECISION BY THE PEOPLE, PRESUMABLY MEANING THROUGH ITS PARLIAMENT.

6. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID HE WISHED TO EMPHASIZE WITH US AS HE HAD IN CONVERSATION WITH THE INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER THAT THIS INTERIM GOVERNMENT WAS ENGAGED IN NO MAJOR POLICY SHIFTS INTENDED TO UPSET PEACE IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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SUBCONTINENT. A WEAK GOVERNMENT LIKE THE BDG COULD NOT AFFORD TO ESCALATE ITS PROBLEMS AND COULD ONLY HOPE ITS INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS WOULD BE RESOLVED DIPLOMATICALLY. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID THAT HE FEARED THAT INDIA WANTED THE BDG POLICY TO BE "NON-ALIGNED WITH A PRO-INDIAN TILT." HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THIS HAD BEEN THE POLICY DURING MUJIB'S REIGN BUT OBSERVED THAT DURING THAT PERIOD INDIAN'S 1971 POPULARITY HAD SUFFERED IN TANDEM WITH MUJIB'S OWN DIMINISHING IMAGE STARTING IN 1973-1974. THE GOI, HE ADDED, COULD NOT EXPECT THIS GOVERNMENT TO ADOPT ENTIRELY THE SAME POSTURE AS THAT OF MUJIB, BUT THAT SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED AS MEANING THAT BANGLADESH WAS ANTI-INDIAN. HE REPEATED AGAIN THAT THE POLICY OF THIS GOVERNMENT WAS OPPOSED TO ANY ACTION (READ "POWER GAME"?) WHICH WOULD ALIENATE RELATIONS WITH ANY OF ITS NEIGHBORS IN THE

SUBCONTINENT.

7. COMMENT: TABARAK HUSAIN IS A SERIOUS LOOKING MAN  
UNDER MOST CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT TODAY HE SEEMED PARTICULARLY  
ANXIOUS AND EVEN FRUSTRATED. HE HAD NOT EXPRESSLY ASKED  
FOR US'S GOOD OFFICES, BUT HE WAS UNTYPICALLY EXPLICIT  
ABOUT THE PERCEIVED EXTERNAL HAND BEHIND BDG'S CURRENT TROUBLES.  
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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** REFUGEES, FOREIGN RELATIONS, INTERVENTION, MINORITIES, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, ALLEGATIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 25 NOV 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** KelleyW0  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** KelleyW0  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 04 AUG 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <04 AUG 2003 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <25 NOV 2003 by KelleyW0>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** INDIA AND BANGLADESH  
**TAGS:** PFOR, BG, IN, (HUSAIN, TABARAK)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006